



2002 Wetlands Reserve Program

Program Focus —

PRAIRIE POTHOLES

Multiple basins

SPECIAL PROJECTS

Glacial Ridge

Grass Lake

Straight River Marsh

PARTNERSHIPS

State of Minnesota

Ducks Unlimited

MN Waterfowl
Association

US Fish and Wildlife
Service

Legislative
Commission on
Minnesota Resources

National Fish and
Wildlife Foundation

Minnesota Summary

Since 1994 Minnesota has been implementing the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP), starting as a pilot state at the inception of the program. Minnesota utilizes a WRP Subcommittee of the State Technical Committee to recommend program goals, objectives and technical considerations. Their recommendations included focusing WRP efforts on multiple basin prairie pothole sites, partnerships and special project areas.

Overview of FY 2002 accomplishments

Funding....

\$17 million in FY2002 WRP funding was received and obligated in the month of September. There were 79 contracts funded containing over 12,500 acres.

Easement Processing....

During FY 2002, processing of previously funded contracts continued with 9,750.5 acres of WRP easements being recorded throughout the state. Minnesota recorded the second highest number of WRP easements in the nation in FY2002 with 66 easements being recorded.

Restoration Accomplishments....

In FY2002, nearly 4,000 easement acres were restored. This included over 2,400 acres of emergent fresh water wetlands restored, over 1,560 acres of uplands seeded to native grasses and forbs, 6,000 native shrubs and trees planted and 10 acres of emergent fresh water wetlands enhanced.

Special Projects and Partnerships....

Seven landowners in Big Stone County signed 30-year WRP easements on a total of 584 acres. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), during a simultaneous closing purchased the fee title from the landowners for these properties. The site will become "The Centennial Waterfowl Production Area" and will be open for public use. Restoration of the 417-acre wetland basin was completed in October 2002. The 167 acres of uplands will be seeded in the spring of 2003. The dedication of this WPA is scheduled for the spring of 2003.

The Glacial Ridge Project is the largest wetland/tall grass prairie restoration in the world and is located in northwest Minnesota. Of the 9,750.5 acres recorded in FY2002, over 5,700 acres were in the Glacial Ridge project area. Of the 12,500 acres funded with the FY2002 allocation, over 5,400 were funded in the Glacial Ridge project area. Total Glacial Ridge acres enrolled in WRP are close to 16,000. There are still over 12,000 acres in the project area awaiting funding. The major partners for this project include The Nature Conservancy, Ducks Unlimited, MN DNR, Minnesota Waterfowl Association, City of Crookston, USGS, and many others. It is anticipated that this site will become a National Wildlife Refuge in the future.

Through agreements with Ducks Unlimited, Minnesota Waterfowl Association and USFWS, the NRCS is able to accelerate restoration efforts through increased technical assistance to the field offices and landowners. This has resulted in a significant increase in the number of WRP applications submitted, easements funded, restorations completed and monitoring accomplished. As a result of this cooperative effort, four Restoration Biologists have been hired by the aforementioned organizations to work solely on WRP.



NRCS, in partnership with Minnesota Waterfowl Association and USFWS received a two-year grant for \$350,000 from the Legislative Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCMR) to provide additional staffing to accelerate WRP in identified critical fish and wildlife habitat corridors. This is a 20-year effort with funding for the first two years approved through proceeds from the Minnesota state lottery by LCMR. In June, two Restoration Biologists and a Civil Engineering Technician were hired to work on WRP in designated habitat corridors. The addition of this staff brings the total WRP field staff to seven.

In Summary....

Total WRP enrollment in Minnesota is now at 334 contracts on over 39,500 acres at a total cost of over \$42 million. WRP remains a popular program with Minnesota landowners. Currently a backlog of 170 priority applications nearing 30 million dollars exists.

Program Benefits

Restoring sites in the Prairie Pothole Region of the state (the western one half of the state) has been one of the primary goals of the WRP. A priority has been placed on multiple basin large-scale projects. The desired outcomes with these restorations focus on waterfowl production.



Connecting corridors at a project level has also been a primary focus. This includes three Special Projects – Grass Lake, Straight River and the Glacial Ridge Project. Grass Lake and Straight River are multiple landowner efforts that when complete will restore thousands of acres to native ecosystems benefiting a wide array of migratory species. A wide variety of habitats for migratory species, threatened and endangered species and indigenous wildlife will be benefited.

Producers benefit financially by enrolling land in the WRP. Due to the state of the farm economy, the proceeds from the sale of the easement, other residual sales, and reimbursement from applied restoration practices have kept many producers in business. In addition, rural communities and businesses have benefited from this influx of financial resources associated with WRP.



The goal of the WRP is to restore the easement area, as close as possible, to its native condition. By restoring both the hydrology and the vegetation, both surface and ground water quality are notably improved. Sites restored through WRP can significantly reduce water and wind borne sediment and other potential pollutants. Once restored, a WRP site creates storage for surface water, which positively impacts the hydrology of the surrounding watershed. Depending on the size of the watershed and the size of the WRP easement, the impacts of flash flooding events can be reduced once a site is restored.

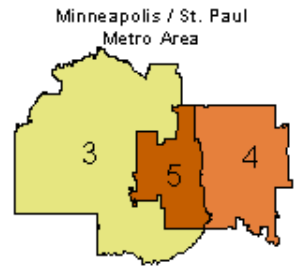
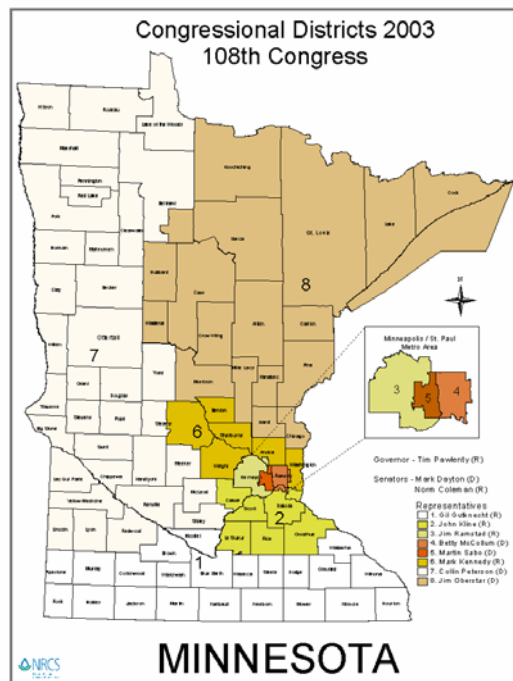
As monitoring efforts increase more documentation will be secured on environmental benefits of the program. Recent monitoring activities, visual observations from landowners and hunter's have indicated a tremendous influx and a greater diversity of wildlife species associated with these easement acres. In recent springs at the Straight River Marsh special project near Owatonna, a wide array of migratory species were observed and counted. These included a variety of ducks, geese, wading birds, songbirds and shorebirds. Many of these species had not been seen in the area for decades.

State contact

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Minnesota Dollars and Contracts by Congressional District



Governor - Tim Pawlenty (R)

Senators - Mark Dayton (D)
Norm Coleman (R)

Representatives

- 1. Gil Gutknecht (R)
- 2. John Kline (R)
- 3. Jim Ramstad (R)
- 4. Betty McCollum (D)
- 5. Martin Sabo (D)
- 6. Mark Kennedy (R)
- 7. Collin Peterson (D)
- 8. Jim Oberstar (D)

Minnesota Dollars and Contracts

Congressional Districts	Fiscal Year 2002		Cumulative Total (95-02)	
	Obligated Dollars	Number of Contracts	Obligated Dollars	Number of Contracts
District 1	\$6,059,034	36	\$15,495,622	153
District 2	\$2,229,762	10	\$8,813,734	105
District 3	0	0	\$259,197	8
District 4	0	0	0	0
District 5	0	0	0	0
District 6	0	0	44,071	2
District 7	\$8,711,204	31	\$17,897,807	64
State Totals	\$17,000,000	77	\$42,510,431	332



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